

Against media monopolization!

I am writing to you today to comment on Docket No. 02-277, The Biennial Review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules. In its mandate to promote competition, diversity and localism in today's media market, I strongly believe that the FCC should retain and even consider strengthening all of the current media ownership rules now in question. These rules serve the public interest by limiting the market power of already huge companies in the broadcast industry.

The U.S. Supreme Court in the landmark 1969 case of *Red Lion v. FCC* states:

"It is the purpose of the First Amendment to preserve an uninhibited marketplace of ideas in which truth will ultimately prevail, rather than to countenance monopolization of that market, whether it be by the Government itself or a private licensee. It is the right of the public to receive suitable access to social, political, esthetic, moral, and other ideas and experiences which is crucial here. That right may not constitutionally be abridged either by Congress or by the FCC."

When the FCC was formed in the 1930's it was created, in my understanding, to serve and protect the public interest. The airwaves were owned by the people of the United States and entities were granted licenses to broadcast as long as they served the public interest. I do not understand how allowing an increasingly small number of entities to control the media serves the public interest. We are taught that in totalitarian governments control is exerted over the citizens of that country through control and manipulation of the media by the state and/or by oligarchs aligned with the interests of the state. We criticize China for its control of the internet, Saddam Hussein for his control of television and newspapers, the Taliban for control of radio, etc. In the Balkan, the Afghan and Iraq wars the media and communication infrastructure of these countries were important military targets to be destroyed, neutralized and replaced with media and broadcast that served the allied interests. Why would we go the way of the totalitarian "freedom hating" regimes that we claim to despise and place the control of the *publicly owned* airwaves in the hands of a few self-interested individuals?

The right to carry on informed debate and discussion of current events is part of the founding philosophy of our nation. Our forefathers believed that democracy was best served by a diverse marketplace of ideas. If the FCC allows our media outlets to merge, our ability to have open, informed discussion with a wide variety of viewpoints will be at an end.

The public interest will best be served by preserving media ownership rules in question in this proceeding.

In addition to the official hearing on this matter in Richmond, VA, I strongly urge the FCC to hold additional hearings elsewhere around the nation to solicit the widest possible participation from the public which will be the most directly affected by the outcomes of these decisions. I think it is important for the FCC to not only consider the points of view of those with a financial interest in this issue, but also those with a social or civic interest.

With the serious impact these rule changes will have on our democracy, it is incumbent on the Commission to take the time to review these issues more thoroughly and allow the American people to have a meaningful say in

the process. We are not just consumers, we are citizens in a democratic republic and should be treated as such.

Thank you for your time. Please help preserve our democracy.

Sincerely,

David Justice
Monterey, California